Congress passes the Safe Drinking Water Act. **1975** Car makers begin installing catalytic converters in new vehicles. **1976** polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs). **1977** National energy plan of President Jimmy Carter focuses on conservation and

CLEAN WATER

Safe Drinking Water for Everyone - A Presidential Mandate

America has come a long way since 1969, when rivers in many cities were open sewers and the Cuyahoga River, polluted with volatile chemicals, caught fire in Cleveland, Ohio. From a world of waterways contaminated with industrial waste and inadequate sewage treatment, we tackled our problems head on and solved many of the big ones.

Armed with legislation and funding from Congress, the Environmental Protection Agency led the fight to reclaim and restore the nation's rivers, lakes and harbors. The Clean Water Act, passed in 1972, only two years after EPA was established, gave the agency its first authority to reduce industrial discharges into public waters. During the next 28 years, the American people have kept more than one billion pounds of toxic pollution every year from entering our waterways.

Responding to public concern over findings of harmful chemicals in drinking water supplies, EPA established health-based standards under the 1974 Safe Drinking Water Act. Today, thanks to successful environmental protection, the United States enjoys one of the best supplies of safe drinking water in the world. Two-thirds of our people get their drinking water from lakes and rivers and the balance from ground water.

Courtesy of Dave Stroud, Ohio EPA

Drinking water standards are now in place for more than 80 different contaminants, which public water suppliers monitor to ensure our safety. In 1998, President Clinton called on community water suppliers to tell customers where their water comes from and what chemicals it contains.

Fish are now plentiful in rivers once too contaminated to support aquatic life. Massive fish kills were in recent memory common and threatened the fishing industry in the Chesapeake Bay, Delaware Estuary and other primary fisheries.

People now swim and fish in many lakes and rivers where before it was unthinkable. The Clean Water Act has doubled the amount of water suitable for fishing and swimming.

Ocean dumping of sewage sludge, industrial waste, plastic debris and medical waste has been banned. More than 30,000 major industrial dischargers pretreat waste before it enters local sewers. This has removed from our sewers 75 percent of the toxic discharges that include heavy metals and PCBs. Since 1990, through site planning, facility inspection and oil spill exercises, EPA has decreased spills at oil storage facilities.

Congress mandates cradle-to-grave regulation of hazardous waste. President Gerald Ford mandates phase-out of renewable, non-polluting energy resources. 1978 EPA and other agencies ban CFCs as a propellant in most aerosol cans. 1979

However, despite this tremendous progress, 40 percent of our surface waters are still not safe for fishing and swimming. About half of the country's 2,000 major watersheds, including the Chesapeake Bay, have water quality problems that threaten living creatures and pose a public health risk.

To eliminate these health threats, hundreds of billions of federal, state and local dollars have helped to upgrade sewage treatment plants and build new drinking water facilities for 73 million people in thousands of communities. More than 85 percent of all Americans now have safe, healthy drinking water. President Clinton has challenged EPA to raise this to 100 percent.

Courtesy of Andy Llyod

The Ohio River is shown flowing by Wheeling, W. Va. This river is the source of drinking water for millions of people in Pennsylvania, Ohio, West Virginia, Kentucky, Indiana and Illinois.

The Public's Right to Know

A new consumer confidence rule requires local water companies to tell customers about the source, quality, ingredients and possible contaminants in their water, and to include health education statements for children, the elderly and people with immune system disorders.

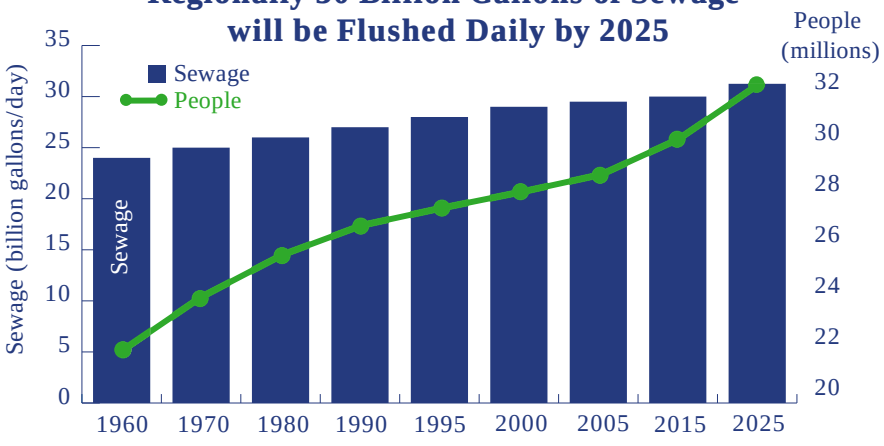
EPA and the states regulate more than 21,000 water supplies in the mid-Atlantic region. The 600 largest systems supply 90 percent of the water consumed by 26 million residents. Only 10 percent of public water is supplied by the remaining 20,400 small- and medium-size water systems.

Enforcing Drinking Water Standards

A significant factor in cleaning up drinking water supplies is enforcement of our anti-pollution laws. During the last five years, EPA has taken 64,393 enforcement actions against public water systems in the mid-Atlantic region. These actions can be informal or formal, ranging from a phone call asking why a particular report is late, to a full-blown criminal action that can carry a jail sentence for the worst polluters.

In 1995, Washington, D.C. residents awoke to the news that they had to boil their water to make it safe to drink. The city-owned-and-managed

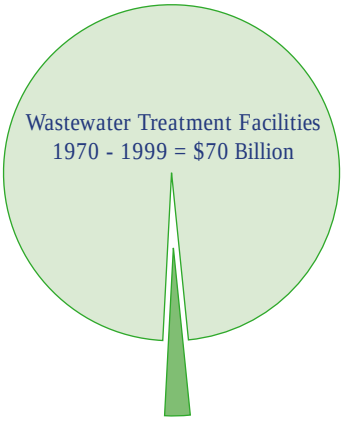
Regionally 30 Billion Gallons of Sewage will be Flushed Daily by 2025



Population in the mid-Atlantic states has increased significantly and is projected to be 31 million by 2025. 30 billion gallons of human waste is flushed every day, and will grow with the population. The water we flush today may be the water we drink tomorrow. That's why sewage treatment and drinking water standards are so important.

An accident at Three Mile Island, near Harrisburg, Pa., increases public debate about the safety of nuclear power. EPA Compensation, and Liability Act, known as Superfund. 1981 Interagency task force reports that acid rain is intensifying in the

Billions of Dollars in Funding to Improve Water Quality in Region III



The mid-Atlantic region has 5,100 community water systems that provide water for more than 27 million people. EPA provides funds for communities to improve their wastewater and drinking water treatment and trains sewage treatment and drinking water operators.

Courtesy of Region III Drinking Water Program

In Region III there are 267 large drinking water systems. Three have chosen to surpass federal and state drinking water standards and have been recognized with EPA's Directors Award. Above, Deputy Administrator W. Michael McCabe is presenting this award to Philadelphia's Water Department.

utility had diverted water revenues to other city projects, resulting in serious deterioration of the drinking water system. EPA worked with Congress to clean up the contaminated distribution system and to establish a new regional water and sewer authority with an accountable financing and management structure.

New Threats to Drinking Water

The biggest source of pollution to the nation's waters today is agricultural runoff. It affects 70 percent of our rivers and streams and 49 percent of our lakes. For example, common practice by farmers is spreading manure on fields as fertilizer. Over the years, farmland has become saturated with nutrients that far exceed the ability of crops and soil to absorb them. The excess nitrogen and phosphorus flow as pollution into rivers, streams, and ground water.

As part of President Clinton's Clean Water Action Plan in 1998, EPA and the U.S. Department of Agriculture released a national strategy to minimize water pollution from animal feeding operations. Toxic waste also can threaten water supplies.

The movie, *A Civil Action*, was a reminder of how contaminated ground water could become toxic drinking water. Now state environmental agencies are assessing surface and ground water — our drinking water sources — to identify potential contamination.

• For specific information about your local drinking water, access the web site http://www.epa.gov/safewater/ which links to more than 300 reports serving nearly 100 million people or call ***The Safe Drinking Water Hotline at (800) 426-4791.***

Enforcing Water Quality Permits

EPA's mid-Atlantic region set a national precedent in its action against Smithfield Foods's pollution of the James River basin. EPA struck a blow on behalf of the Chesapeake Bay by forcing Smithfield to stop dumping an estimated 3 million gallons a day of animal waste into the Pagan River, and treat it at a sewage plant. The $12.6 million judgment in 1997 is the second highest awarded in Clean Water Act litigation.

Courtesy of Roy Seneca

Students, seniors and citizens promise to conserve and protect drinking water by taking the Blue Thumb Pledge.

withdraws Agent Orange from the U.S. market. 1980 Congress passes the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Northeastern U.S. and Canada and outlines a 10-year global research plan. 1982 Congress passes laws to provide long-term,